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HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE OF
MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS
Third meeting
Buenos Aires, 10 November 1998
Item 3 of the provisional agenda*

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE SECOND MEETING OF THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS

Statement by the Executive Director

INTRODUCTION

1. The conclusions of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials at its second meeting, held from 2 to 4 March 1998, addressed, inter alia, trust funds in support of the work of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials; adequate, growing and predictable funding of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); UNEP reform and revitalization in the context of United Nations reform; and freshwater. The present statement reports on the status of implementation of these activities since the second meeting of the Committee.

I. STATUS OF THE TRUST FUNDS IN SUPPORT OF THE WORK OF THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS

2. In response to subparagraphs (n) and (o) of Governing Council decision 19/32 of 4 April 1997, two trust funds, one general and one technical, were established in support of the work of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials. As at 30 September 1998, the Technical Trust Fund, established to cover the costs of the meetings of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials, had received $300,000 both in 1997 and in 1998,

* UNEP/HLC/3/1

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totalling $600,000, from the United States of America. To date, a total of $90,450, inclusive of the administrative support cost, has been spent, leaving a balance of $509,550 for programming.

3. As at 30 September 1998, the General Trust Fund, established to provide financial assistance to facilitate the participation in the work of the Committee of developing countries and, in particular, the least developed among them, had received contributions to a total of $99,766, consisting of $33,040 from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and $7,308 from Australia in 1997 and $6,803 from Switzerland, $5,000 from Argentina and $47,615 from Norway in 1998. To date, a total of $34,229, inclusive of the administrative support cost, has been spent, leaving a positive balance of $65,537 available for programming. The financial status of the trust funds to support the meetings of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials is contained in the annex to the present statement.

4. The Executive Director continues to seek funding support to ensure the wide participation of developing countries and countries with economies in transition in the work of the Committee. To this end, an appeal was made on 24 September 1998 to donor Governments for contributions to the General Trust Fund, to support the participation of the above-mentioned countries in the third meeting of the Committee.

II. ADEQUATE GROWING AND PREDICTABLE FUNDING FOR UNEP

5. The Executive Director circulated three documents (UNEP/HLC/2/3; UNEP/HLC/2/3/Add.1; UNEP/HLC/2/INF/4) dealing with stable, adequate and predictable financing of UNEP in the future and with the critical financial shortfall facing UNEP in the current biennium, for the consideration of the Committee at its second meeting, held from 2 to 4 March 1998. Time did not permit a full discussion of these papers at that meeting. Some delegations offered helpful suggestions, however, when making their general statements.

6. At its nineteenth session, the Governing Council, in decision 19/23 of 7 February 1997, requested the Executive Director to explore, in consultation with Governments, ways and means to secure stable, adequate and predictable funding for UNEP in the future, and to report thereon to the Governing Council at its twentieth session. Accordingly, preparations are in hand to place before the Governing Council at its twentieth session a paper comprising proposals for stable, adequate and predictable funding.

7. In addition, the secretariat has undertaken fruitful efforts to build a strong relationship with the Turner Foundation, which was established, inter alia, to provide funding for environmental activities in certain priority areas. The Turner Foundation will only fund projects for activities which are not part of the UNEP regular programme of activities. The adequate and predictable funding for UNEP core activities will continue to depend on Governments' contribution to the Environment Fund.

III. UNEP REFORM AND REVITALIZATION IN THE CONTEXT OF UNITED NATIONS REFORM

8. In addition to the conclusions of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials at its second meeting, at its fifth special session held from 20 to 22 May 1998, the Governing Council also adopted decision SS.V/2 of 22 May 1998, on the revitalization, reform and strengthening of UNEP. Significant progress has been reached not only in the area of the reform of UNEP itself, but also in the reform of UNEP within the context of United Nations reform, as is evident from the recommendations of the report of the United Nations Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements (UNEP/HLC/3/INF/1).

9. A more detailed report on progress in the reform of UNEP will be presented under item 6 of the provisional agenda, on the reform of UNEP.

IV. FRESHWATER

10. The third area of concentration for UNEP is freshwater. The issue of freshwater resources as a major requirement for human survival and social and economic development remains a high priority, both within the UNEP work programme and within other United Nations agency agendas. To that end, the UNEP High-Level Committee of Ministers and Officials highlighted the environmental aspects of those issues as a UNEP priority.

11. In response to this imperative, as well as to discussions arising from the various international meetings on freshwater resources, UNEP is working to define the environmental aspects of its water-related work. One activity is the enhancement of UNEP abilities to broker international cooperation on transboundary water issues, including a planned evaluation of the effectiveness of existing legal instruments for integrated water management and use at the river and lake basin scale. UNEP is also working to finalize and test scientifically sound guidelines for the integrated management of freshwater rivers and lakes and the downstream coastal areas into which they drain. As a complementary activity within the context of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, efforts are underway to put into practical operation the clearing-house mechanism for specific pollutant source categories. Partnerships are being pursued with previously under-utilized partners in the field of water. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development and its member industries represent a prominent example.

12. UNEP water-related assessment activities are also being revitalized, including efforts to modernize the Global Environment Monitoring System (GEMS)/Water monitoring efforts. A particular goal is to develop an approach for presenting the results of this monitoring in a form readily understood and used by water managers and decision makers. UNEP is also working with its sister agencies to develop an early warning component within GEMS/Water, thereby allowing easier identification and analysis of emerging water-related issues on a global and regional scale. UNEP and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) (Habitat) have recently received funding approval from the Turner Foundation for a joint project, entitled "Managing Water for African Cities", to address, first, water demand management in

urban areas, and, second, identification and mitigation of the impacts of urban areas on freshwater resources. Within the context of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa, UNEP and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) are working to develop a joint water assessment and technology initiative to address some of the water objectives of the Special Initiative. UNEP has also taken initial steps to determine its role in regard to the impacts of the La Niña phenomenon on freshwater resources. Finally, UNEP is working to make better use of government expertise in its water-related work. A recent example is the request by UNEP to its Committee of Permanent Representatives to provide the thoughts and recommendations of their Governments on UNEP work in addressing the special needs of small island developing States.

Annex

HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS
FINANCIAL STATUS OF THE TRUST FUNDS TO SUPPORT MEETINGS OF THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS

1. Technical Trust Fund in Support of the Work of the UNEP High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials

Contribution by the Government of the United States of America to cover the costs of the meetings of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials

	1997	1998 (as at 31/09/98)	Total
Contribution paid	300,000	300,000	600,000
Expenditures			
Overtime of GS staff	10,268	-	10,268
Temporary Assistance	20,264	7,240	27,504
Translation costs	23,768	-	23,768
Communications (tel, fax etc)	18,504	-	18,504
Sub-Total, expenditures	**72,804**	**7,240**	**80,044**
Trust Fund Support Cost 13%	9,465	941	10,406
Total Expenditures	**82,269**	**8,181**	**90,450**
Remaining	217,731	291,819	509,550
Trust Fund Support Cost 13%	28,305	37,936	66,241
Remaining for activities in 1998	**189,426**	**253,883**	**443,309**

2. General Trust Fund in Support of the Work of the UNEP High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials

To provide financial assistance to facilitate the participation in the work of the Committee by developing countries and in particular the least developed among them, as well as countries with economies in transition.

	1997	1998	Total
Contributions paid			
Australia*	7,308	-	7,308
United Kingdom	33,040	-	33,040
Switzerland	-	6,803	6,803
Argentina	-	5,000	5,000
Norway	-	47,615	47,615
Total	**40,348**	**59,418**	**99,766**
Expenditures			
Participants' travel	1,877	5,202	7,079
Participants' travel	6,874	16,338	23,212
Sub-total, expenditures	**8,751**	**21,540**	**30,291**
Trust Funds Support Cost 13%	1,138	2,800	3,938
Total Expenditures	**9,889**	**24,340**	**34,229**
Remaining	30,459	35,078	65,537
Trust Fund Support Cost	3,960	4,560	8,520
Remaining for activities	**26,499**	**30,518**	**57,017**

* The Australian contribution is limited to be used for travel from their region.